

Vatican Takes Fresh Look at 'Woman' and her Role in the Church



Pontifical Council for the Laity holds a conference with specialists from all over the world, to discuss 'woman' in the 21st Century

Thursday morning 10 October, the Vatican began a conference on woman, entitled “God entrusts the human being to the woman”, a phrase taken from Blessed John Paul II’s apostolic letter *Mulieris Dignitatem* (1998).

The event is being held by the Pontifical Council for the Laity (PCL), who has proposed a “renewed reflection” on the former pope’s important document.

Mulieris Dignitatem dealt with the “anthropological and theological foundations of the feminine condition as an essential foundation for every novelty to occur in the life of the Church.”

The PCL also made reference to the apostolic exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, published a little after, which stated: “above all the acknowledgment in theory of the active and responsible presence of woman in the Church must be realized in practice.”

Indeed it is an awareness of this need that prompted the Council into taking a fresh look at the role of woman in the Church.

“Such an urgency is felt even more keenly today,” it states. “To put the reflections of these documents into effect will offer important indications as to which direction should be taken next, thus responding in turn to the call of Pope Francis.”

The Council refers to Pope Francis’ inauguration mass where he “called everybody, men and women, to ‘be custodians of the created, of the design of God written into nature; to be custodians of each other and of the environment.’”

The PCL explains that “the custodian of the human, far from being an externally imposed weight, is in reality an occasion for personal realisation when it is assumed in the freedom of love.”

The Council also refers to the Holy Father’s emphasis on “fecundity” as an “essential component of

the personal realization of everyone, men and women; fecundity is achieved through that 'sincere gift of self' (GS 24) that is the vocation of every human person, lived nevertheless, in ways particular to both male and female."

It continues: "unfortunately, some ideologies have lost sight of the truth and the richness of the fecundity pertaining to woman; richness that, nevertheless, is lived joyously by many women in different states of life and in different geographical and social contexts."

"In the last 25 years the presence and participation of women in the social, economic, cultural and political spheres has gradually increased. At the same time, however, we have assisted in the growth of a grave, worldwide, anthropological crisis exposed by Pope Benedict XVI. He explained how the men of our time suffer from a 'strange disgust of themselves' that manifests itself in the multiple expressions of uneasiness that are in plain sight for all to see."

The conference aims to discuss these issues, with fresh eyes, addressing the challenges and problems that are relevant to today's society and to the women of the 21st Century.

Specialists as well as movement and association representatives from 25 different countries and 39 organisations will attend the conference. There will be theologians, philosophers, educators, university lecturers, journalists, historians, medics, lawyers, artists, engineers etc.

The guest speakers will talk on a variety of topics, including the 'image' of woman and whether she has renounced her role in today's society, new challenges in today's cultural crisis and their relation to woman's vocation, the identity crisis of men and women, women and the culture of death and much more.

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